

Lost in migration

Undaunted by stories of tough travel, 31-year-old British teacher Edward Newson decided to seize the Spring Festival vacation as his opportunity to get out and see China. But it was the packed trains, not the scenic destinations, that made for unforgettable memories.

Read more on Page 4



Youth begin
exodus from
the office

Page 3

Maldives'
ping pong
ambassador

Page 5

Khan class
fans clamor
for subtitles

Page 6

Painter takes
traditional ink
to the future

Pages 8-9

Festival trends swap tradition for flashiness



The capital saw a rush of consumption during the week-long Lunar New Year holiday.

CFP Photo

By Zhao Hongyi

Everything is changing in China, even the way families celebrate the Lunar New Year.

This week's Spring Festival vacation was marked by excessive dining and shopping, though some people still preferred to relax or visit a traditional fair.

Many people sent their holiday greetings by microblogs instead of traditional meetings, and a temple fair by the Ming Tombs in the city's far north received the most media attention.

According to statistics from the Beijing Municipal Commission of Commerce, the 120 biggest shopping malls, department stores and restaurants generated 3.19 billion yuan in sales revenue during the five days from January 23 to 27.

On the last day of the holiday, sales volume reached 410 million yuan – a 13 percent increase over the previous day.

In most of the big-name shopping malls, like the Guiyou Department Store and Shangpin Mall, daily sales volume saw a rise of more than 30 percent over last year.

Chain restaurants like Xiapu Xiapu Hotpot and Yoshinoya Japanese Noodle saw daily sales volume rise 40.9 percent and 25.2 percent respectively.

Traditional Beijing brands like Bianyifang Roasted Duck and Donglaishun Mutton Hotpot saw a rise of 35 percent and 28 percent

respectively.

"It's the best business season for most of the shops, restaurants and businesses," said Liu Ruhui, deputy chairman of the Beijing Association of Business and Commerce.

And then there were the mobile phone greetings.

Mobile phones have had a staggering rate of adoption during the last decade, and the number of people sending their greetings by phone has risen every year. For many, SMS has replaced traditional door-to-door greetings of family and friends.

China Mobile, the country's largest telecom, claims it delivered 42.3 billion short messages on the night of January 22.

Its Beijing branch, Beijing Mobile, said the number of messages sent rose almost 4 percent from last year to generate 153 million yuan.

Microblogs were an emerging way for younger users to greet relatives and friends.

On the eve of the Spring Festival on January 22, millions of microbloggers sent updates through the popular Sina, Tencent and Sohu services.

Microblogs are becoming one of the frequently used communication tools in China as more and more users upgrade to smartphones by Apple, Samsung and Huawei.

Temple fairs are another highlight of the Spring Festival season. Recent years have seen an increasing number of foreign performers and vendors

attending the city's dozen fairs.

The temple fair in Chaoyang Park has been renamed Chaoyang International Carnival and attracted more than a dozen foreign performing troupes. Shijingshan Temple Fair is another fair popular with foreign nationals.

This year, barbecued meats were the most popular foods at most of the fairs, leaving many to complain that Beijing's own traditional snacks are disappearing.

Many said the temple fairs are becoming "too creative" and abandoning tradition. Temple fairs have long been open gatherings for business, commerce, performance and vending, and have been making a comeback in recent years.

The Eastern Royal Tombs of the Qing Dynasty, located in Zunhua County 125 kilometers from the city center, held a temple fair but failed to attract visitors. It featured a robotic cat named "Avatar" dressed in Qing Dynasty attire, royal cuisine and acrobatic performances.

"It's trampling traditional culture into the dirt," said Zhang Wei, the founder and operator of Beijingers.com. "I can't fathom how a robotic cat is related to the Qing Dynasty, let alone the movie Avatar."

"It's inappropriate to hold a temple fair at a tomb and goes against folk traditions," said Han Shuoze, a member of the Beijing Folklore Association.

Brief

Han Han sues writer for questioning authorship

Author Han Han filed a lawsuit charging Fang Zhouzi of defamation on January 29. Fang had suggested that works published under Han's name had been ghostwritten.

The lawsuit followed days of heated exchange.

Han has demanded that Fang issue a retraction and an apology and is seeking damages of 100,000 yuan, his agent Lu Jinpo said on his own microblog the day of the suit.

Lu said that Fang's online comments and articles, which claimed that Han's previous works were written by his father, had damaged Han's reputation and caused him economic losses.

On the same day, Han used his blog to answer a number of questions raised by the public, saying he had collected 1,000 pages from manuscripts written between 1997 and 2000 to submit as evidence in court.

Han's last announcement on January 25 about works published in his earlier career fueled online attacks from the likes of Fang. Han responded by posting a strongly worded article on his blog on January 28 that said those attacking him held personal grudges.

Fang, who founded the science magazine *New Thread* and earned a name for exposing fake academic records of a number of well-known figures, responded to the lawsuit by telling the local *Legal Evening News* that he believed he would be vindicated in a fair trial. Fang said his lawyer would handle the lawsuit and that he would continue to raise questions, as he sees the Internet as his main battlefield.

Supporters of Han said the recent attacks on the popular young writer may have been brought about by his articles on revolution, democracy and freedom, published on his blog in late December.

Siri finds a Chinese sister named Airi

Siri, the personal voice assistant integrated into Apple's iPhone 4S, now has a Chinese counterpart on Android named Airi.

Airi was developed by nine Guizhou University students. The application can be downloaded using from the Android Market. A member of the development team said they started to work on the software for fun and never thought it would become so popular.

Airi, commonly referred as the "black-haired beauty" by Chinese users to compare her with the English-speaking Siri, now has more than 100,000 users in China.

The *Qianjiang Evening News* said that the new application is so popular because it requires less bandwidth than Siri, understands Chinese and costs nothing to download.

(Agencies)

'Naked resignation'

Young employee turnover spells trouble for companies

By Huang Daohen

Even with no jobs lined up or plans to find one, a growing number of young people are choosing to quit work and pursue their personal interests.

The casual attitude, unthinkable in the country only several years ago, is now becoming increasingly prevalent among both professionals and migrant workers.

The emerging social trend, called "naked resignation," can be dire for companies who depend on well-trained and dependable workers.



Job seekers scan employment information at a job fair. Many are abandoning their jobs absent better opportunities to take a break and rethink their careers. **An Xin/CFP Photo**

Living life one day at a time

With his bags packed, Zhang Tao is planning a trip to Inner Mongolia.

Zhang, in his early 30s, was a former news editor for a local website. But late last year, Zhang began to feel that the job he had been doing for almost five years was boring and leading nowhere.

"I just suddenly feel that it's not worth it to stay up late every night and wanted to take a break," Zhang said Tuesday afternoon over a cappuccino in a downtown cafe in Beijing. "I wanted to use some time to do something I really liked, even if it didn't earn me any money."

So he quit.

Zhang did have enough savings to keep him going for a few months while he indulged in his burning desire to travel. Tibet will be his next destination.

After the trips, Zhang plans to return to work – but at a different company.

Zhang regarded himself as responsible as he had worked at the same job for five years and had a project in mind when he walked out. His younger counterparts, however, didn't.

Migrant worker Zhao Bo, 21, has changed jobs five times during the past two years.

Zhao, from a remote village in Guangyuan in Sichuan Province, now works in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, about 1,000 kilometers away from his hometown.

Zhao was put in the care of his grandparents when he was 10 and his parents, like most in the countryside, left to work in coastal boom towns. His parents sent home 1,000 yuan a year, which was about half the average annual salary of farmers at the time.

In his youth, Zhao witnessed the economic development brought about by the country's opening. He felt that his own future could match the economic momentum of the nation as a whole.

So when he turned 19, he left his grandparents' home and decided to move to Zhejiang Province where his parents were living as migrant workers.

But the problem was he was never able to keep a job for long.

After a brief stint at a local barbershop, Zhao found work as a doorkeeper at a hotel for two months. He then moved to working in a shoe factory, hoping that would give him skills he could use in the future.

However, an apprentice can only do some trivial work.

Frustrated, Zhao found a job at a bar. Before he knew it, he had worked five jobs in two years.

Zhao now works at a restaurant, but this too he plans to quit.

Naked resignation on rise

Whether or not young people have a plan for life after their job, the change in attitudes is striking, said Maxi Chen, a consultant at Zhaopin.com, an online employment agency.

"Young people think completely differently from those only a generation ago," Chen said.

They are concerned more with their own emotions in the workplace. "If they are not happy, they choose to quit," he said.

Zhou Lin (pseudonym), one of Chen's clients, left her job at a local public relations firm recently because she was moved from a department she liked to one she disliked without being consulted.

"She didn't like the way the company left her out of the discussion about her own transfer," Chen said.

Chen said he first noticed the trend in 2010 when more clients showed up to seek work having left a previous job.

The trend is especially

evident in major cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, Chen said.

A recent survey by Zhaopin.com of 5,000 job applicants in first-tier cities showed that half resigned from their previous jobs before finding another.

"Pressure and a lack of satisfaction are driving this phenomenon," Chen said, adding that young people are valuing happiness and ambition more than title and salary.

As the country's economy grows, more companies are desperate for skilled workers, creating more job opportunities, Chen said.

That suits the young migrant worker Zhao's adventurous streak. Zhao didn't want his future to be taking care of the pigs or working the fields. He wanted to try everything new and believed that he could make his own fortune in the city.

So when he realized he had to change jobs, he felt no pressure to do so.

Hidden problems

But the high turnover in young workers is ultimately bad news for Chinese companies.

According to a local newspaper in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, more than half of the workers quit within six

months at an electronic parts factory operated by a Japanese company. The company has to hire 400 new workers every month to maintain a workforce of 4,000.

A similar case happened in a factory run by a US company in Shenzhen that employs about 50,000 people, 60 percent of whom leave within one year.

The situation is even dire at smaller businesses in Wenzhou.

Tianxiang Textile Company used to employ 300 workers, but now has only 200.

"Nearly half of our assembly lines are stopped. We are now having troubles meeting our shipping dates," said Yang Jieing, manager of Tianxiang.

The factory offers a monthly salary of 3,000 yuan. While that is not low, it receives few applicants for the job.

Yang said he would not call the young workers quitters, and understands that as living standards improve, young people listen more to their hearts.

Yang said managers have to change their way of thinking to attract and retain employees.

"Unless a company responds to these changes, the situation will quickly get out of hand," he said.

Foreigner experiences mad rush of travel season



Buying a ticket from Xi'an to Chengdu



By Wu Tong

While many foreign teachers head back home during Spring Festival, Edward Newson, a 31-year-old British teacher of English, set out to see China.

Newson, whose Chinese name is An Nuo, began teaching last September at China Agricultural University.

His plan was to go from Beijing to Kunming by way of Taiyuan, Pingyao, Xi'an and Chengdu. His students reminded him of the inconvenience beforehand, but Newson thought it would be a good opportunity to learn more about China.

The "biggest human migration in the world" left Newson a deep impression. He had heard that an estimated 300 million people, many of whom are students or migrant workers, go home to celebrate Spring Festival each year, surpassing the capacity of the railway system. But it wasn't until he was wedged into a train car going from Taiyuan to Pingyao that he realized just how serious the situation is.

Like all the passengers, Newson was worried about finding a ticket. The first thing he needed to do after arriving in Xi'an was to wait in a long line to buy a ticket to Chengdu. He was relieved to get even a hard-seat ticket.

On his way to Kunming, he encountered an unexpected situation. After he put away his luggage and sat down, a Chinese woman who had failed to buy a seat walked toward him and set a plastic bucket in front of him and sat on his lap, closing her eyes to rest.

Newson was stunned at first, then responded in a gentlemanly manner and gave up his seat.

Newson had prepared four books, a pair of earplugs and MP3s for the 16 hours on the road. But because of the noise and the crowded environment, he soon switched his plan and began chatting with others. On his way from Chengdu to Kunming, he told passengers what it's like to celebrate holidays in the UK, where an eight-hour-trip from the north to the south is hassle-free.

Newson said it was an unforgettable experience to see so many passengers sleeping on the floor of the carriage, trying so hard to get home. The family bonds in China made him recall memories of his own family.

He is planning to visit his parents back home when this journey is over.



A woman plants herself in front of Newson.

British teacher Edward Newson experiences the Spring Festival rush.



Making friends in close confinement



Newson arrives in Chengdu. Next stop: Kunming.

Photos provided by Deng Xiaowei

Ambassador reflects on China-Maldives relations

By Wu Hao

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Sino-Maldivian diplomatic relations, with planned celebrations including a small film festival and increased cultural exchange.

"We're going to send cultural troupes sometime during the year to perform in different locations in the Maldives, and then bring them to perform in Beijing," said Ahmed Latheef, Maldives' ambassador to China. "Also I'm hoping to have high-level delegations from Maldives come to China."

The Chinese embassy in Maldives is also planning some activities on the island-nation of just over 300,000 people, Latheef said.

Last year, the Chinese government opened an embassy in Maldives, an important development for the two countries' relations.

"With the two embassies joining together, we can do many more things, we can expect our relations to grow much faster," Latheef said.



Latheef participates in a bit of ping pong diplomacy.

Photo provided by Maldives embassy

The pearl on the Indian Ocean

Being one of the best-known tourism destinations around the world, the Maldives and its unique scenery has become increasingly popular in China, especially among young couples.

"Last year, Chinese were among the top visitors from around the world to come to the Maldives. By the end of last year, we had almost 200,000 visitors from China, quite a significant number," Latheef said.

There are direct flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Hong Kong, and discounted flights available during holidays such as Spring Festival and National Day.

There are different travel packages for Chinese tourists to choose from. They include sightseeing, accommodations and transportation.

Four-night packages range from 8,000 to 12,000 yuan, depending on the quality of the hotel.

"You have your private beach right in front of you because the rooms are usually all around the hotels facing

the sea," Latheef said. "The beach is private property."

The islands, Latheef pointed out, never get too crowded due to accommodation limitations.

"Each island has 100 to 150 rooms; you don't even see others on the beach. It's peaceful and exclusive in that sense, unlike Sanya," Latheef said.

Exchanges over the years

Latheef said he has been quite impressed by China's development.

During the past few years, with more and more high-level exchanges in various areas between the two countries, Sino-Maldivian relations have been strengthened.

"Many development projects in the area of housing and other infrastructure have grown at a faster pace," Latheef said. "And in the area of investment, we talked with many groups and companies and individuals who are interested in investing in Maldives. There are so many potential places of investment and so many

opportunities in Maldives that are unutilized."

Although Latheef thinks many Chinese may find that the investment scale in Maldives isn't as big as they're used to, he said he believes the country is making progress and something big will come up in the near future.

Few people can speak Chinese in the Maldives, which has traditionally also been an obstacle.

"We've just sent a Chinese teacher to Maldives to teach in the schools, industries and institutions. Also, we now have young diplomats who are studying Mandarin here in China," Latheef said.

Latheef said he was impressed by the modern teaching methods he encountered at the Confucius Institutes headquarters in Beijing.

"We want to start a Confucius classroom first, according to the response from students, and then try to link it with the Confucius Institutes," he said. "This is something we've been trying to do in the past four years."

Fan of Chinese sports

Latheef first arrived in Beijing as ambassador in 2008. He said Beijing improved dramatically both during and after the Olympics. He was impressed that "a big city like Beijing has been able to maintain cleanliness and order. It's becoming more vibrant, more cosmopolitan. You have everything here."

But 2008 wasn't Latheef's first visit to China. Being a ping pong player, he's participated in a bit of ping pong diplomacy in the past.

"I'm a big sports fan. I like Beijing because there are so many sports facilities here," he said.

Latheef has organized a ping pong tournament in each of his four years in China. This year, he's planning something special.

"Last year we had 32 embassies participate," he said. "It's a great way to meet new friends and diplomats. We also get the support of the Ping Pong Association of China."

Latheef goes to local clubs or parks up to three times a week to play ping pong.

"Most of the locals don't expect a foreigner to play ping pong well at my level," he said. "When you go to club and start playing, then Chinese people want to play with you. It's very interesting. If you win, then somebody else would like to play with you, and you can't leave until you lose."

"The first night, if you're lucky, you can leave the club, but the next day they get somebody from somewhere that is very skilled to make sure you don't win the second time."

Even though those people have no idea that Latheef is an ambassador, they all know the Maldives, and Latheef feels happy with their "close affection."

"We can relate to them easily," he said.

Latheef now is also trying to learn tai chi, after he was invited by a Chinese NGO to experience tai chi with other diplomats. "2012 could be my last year in China," he said. "I have to practice tai chi more seriously because this is the last year."

"This is something I want to take back to the Maldives after leaving here," he said.

'Khan storm' hits China

By Han Manman

When high school student Chen Feng found herself stumped by a geometry lesson in class, she didn't ask her teacher or classmate for help. Instead, she went straight home to search for an online video provided by the Khan Academy.

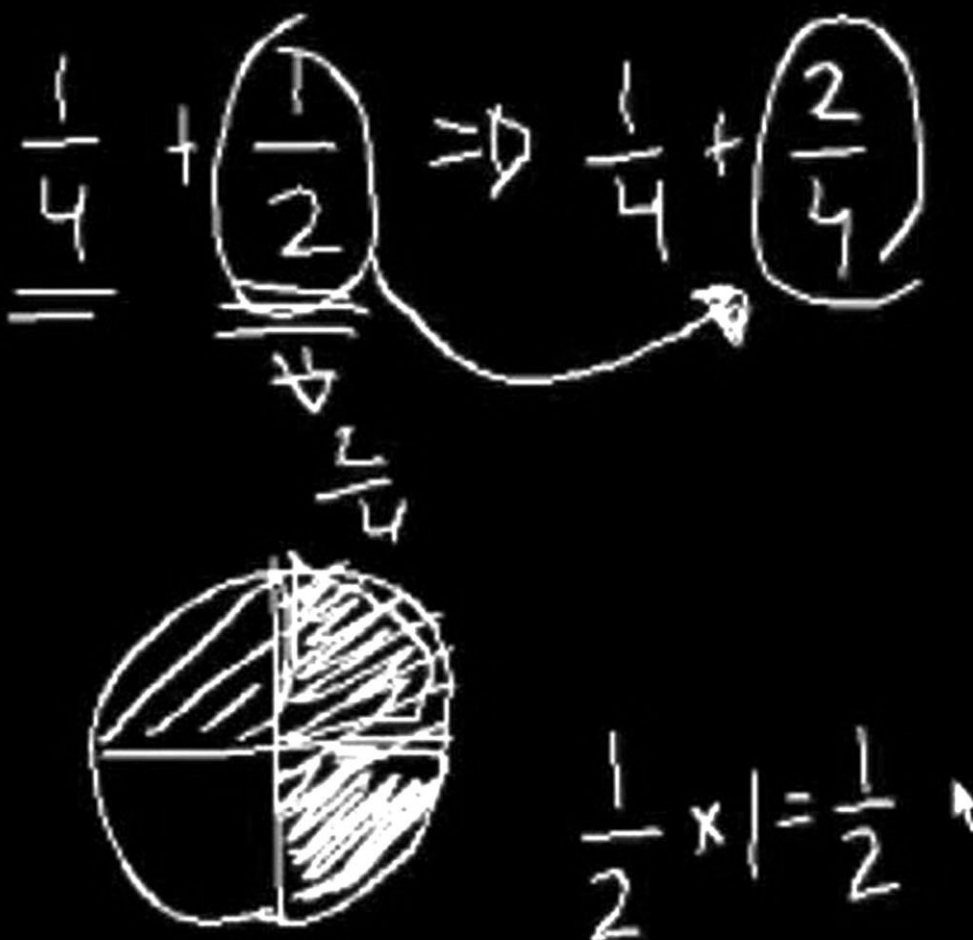
Several minutes later, she understood.

The Khan Academy aims to be a global "virtual school," providing free lessons accessible to everyone. It currently has more than 2,700 videos online covering a range of subjects.

This nonprofit organization is the brainchild of Salman Khan, an Ivy League-trained math whiz and son of an immigrant single mother. He has become something of an online sensation with his lessons on YouTube, which attract millions of viewers a month.



Khan has become something of an online sensation with his lessons on YouTube.



Khan's videos utilize screen captures of notes he makes as he talks through a topic.

Photos provided by Sina Weibo

Free world-class education

"All of the site's resources are available to anyone," according to the Khan Academy website. "It doesn't matter if you are a student, teacher, home-schooler, principal, adult returning to the classroom after 20 years or a friendly alien just trying to get a leg up in earthly biology."

With a catalog of more than 2,700 videos on subjects from statistics to history to organic chemistry to the humanities, Khan Academy, from its humble origins, has become the world's most popular educational website.

Users don't have to register, though there are benefits to creating a username and password. The site remembers the videos that users have browsed, and it can direct registered users toward practice exercises.

"Normally, teachers fly blind," Khan said on his website. "They use quizzes, homework and their own observations to try to figure out how much their students understand, but it's a crude process. Day

to day, it's hard to know what a student is and isn't learning."

Khan's videos utilize screen captures of notes he makes as he talks through a topic. The videos feel intimate and compelling.

Khan's unique and simple learning tool has won him lots of followers, including Bill Gates.

"What Sal Khan has done is amazing," Gates said in a video on his personal website. "He's taken all this material and broken it down into little 12-minute lectures. I use it myself to remind myself of things. I have children who like it."

A teacher to the world

Although the Khan Academy has grown to become a team of six, no one denies that 36-year-old Khan is the soul of the academy. It started with him and his camera – and a world of knowledge to share.

The idea for the academy, though, came from Khan's cousin, a 13-year-old who lived across the country.

According to *Wired*, Nadia is not good at math

and asked Khan for help in 2004. Khan agreed to tutor her over the phone. However, one day Nadia told him she didn't want to talk on the phone anymore; she wanted him to just record videos so that she could review the video as many times as she wanted. That way she can scroll back several times over the puzzling parts and fast forward through the boring bits.

Khan realized that remediation – going over and over something that you really ought to already know – is less embarrassing when you can do it privately, with no one watching.

"The worst time to learn something is when someone is standing over your shoulder going, 'Do you get it?'" Khan said.

More of Khan's cousins eventually began asking him for help, and that's when he decided to post some videos to YouTube.

A few days later, Khan discovered that thousands of people were watching his videos. Many sent him notes telling him that he had saved their math careers.

In 2009, Khan quit his

job as an analyst for a hedge fund and formed a nonprofit with a small donation from Ann Doerr, wife of Silicon Valley investor John Doerr.

Roughly 2 million people visit his site every month. MIT's Open Course Ware site, by comparison, has been around since 2001 and averages one million visits each month.

Although critics note that it's not easy to sift through the content on the homepage and that the videos encourage repetitive drilling, the Khan Academy is a great example of approachable content being open to everyone.

Promoting Khan-style education in China

Because the Khan Academy is aiming to help people around the world, it has subtitle options available for speakers of Arabic, French, Hindi-Urdu and Spanish.

But so far, Chinese subtitles aren't available.

A group of Chinese fans are hoping to upload Khan Academy videos onto Chinese video sites and set up a Chinese Khan Academy website.

Li Chenbo is among the volunteers.

For Li, the Khan Academy helped him discover the difference between knowing the name of something and truly learning something.

Li said when Khan explains a concept, he focuses on why it is what it is. When explaining a mathematical formula, he shows you how to derive the formula with some fundamental knowledge, a little intuition and deductive reasoning.

"I really appreciate Khan's lectures on YouTube, but students in China seldom hear about the Khan Academy due to the Great Firewall and language barrier," Li said.

"As a country that prioritizes education, the Khan Academy seems so important and helpful to Chinese students," he said.

Li said he believes many Chinese people will volunteer to do the translating after they get to know what the Khan Academy is all about.

To start watching tutorials and to learn more about the Khan Academy, visit khanacademy.org.

Housing price drop leads to rent hike



With fewer apartments being sold in January compared to last year, there are more renters.

CFP Photo

By Annie Wei

In response to the government's tightened policies on lending, the housing market has begun to weaken, and as a result, more people are renting instead of buying homes.

Hu Jinghui, vice president of 5i5j.com, a real estate chain, said that housing prices rose too fast and government policies now make it difficult for people to get a loan, causing many families to delay their plans to purchase a home.

"Meanwhile, it's helped

more young people accept the idea of renting an apartment instead of owning property," he said.

Guan Yue, a bank associate who moved to Beijing six years ago, decided to continue renting a small apartment with her fiancé before Chinese New Year. Her rent is 2,300 yuan per month.

"We've planned to buy an apartment for two years, but the housing prices are so expensive," Guan said. "Although the price seems to be going

down now, we decided to wait a bit longer."

Since last October, the prices of Beijing's new and second-hand apartments have dropped 15 percent, but the price still remains high. Most second-hand apartments within Fourth Ring Road cost 25,000 to 30,000 yuan per square meter. Cheaper ones are only available in the suburbs.

Traditionally, young couples have put buying a home high on their list of priorities. But these days, more couples are raising families in rented

apartments.

Hu said that more apartments are available in the rental market. With more tenants in the market, the capital's average rent has increased to 3,100 yuan per month in 2011.

February 6 marks the end of Spring Festival, a day where non-Beijingers flock back to the city. This marks the start of the peak season for the rental market. Those who plan to move are advised to wait a couple of weeks afterwards.

Storage space available for rent

By Annie Wei

It's easy to accumulate stuff in the big city – books, appliances, clothes, toys – but what happens when your small apartment gets too cluttered?

Chen Hao, an overseas returnee in Shanghai, recently founded You You Space, public storage rental for individuals, families and small companies.

Rental space is common in other countries, said Chen. Customers can pick up their belongings anytime, which are kept in safe and private storage.

In China, Chen said it is important to find a space within the city, easily accessible by public transportation.

His company has different sized storage lockers ranging from 0.7 to 20 square meters, with rental costs ranging from a few hundred to thousand yuan per month.

Other storage facilities that are available include U-store, a Beijing-based provider that offers small and large lockers.

"If someone is leaving Bei-



You You Space in Shanghai is modern and convenient.

CFP Photo

jing for two or three months' vacation, it may save money to place stuff in a storage room instead of renting an apartment," said Mary Zhou, accountant from U-Store.

Storage space is also suitable for people who plan to start an online store – they

can use it to store inventory.

U-Store has more than 100 warehouses with lockers ranging from 4.5 to 17.5 square meters, with the height of 3 meters. It also provides shelves.

U-Store isn't open around the clock, though it does have

delivery service.

U-Store

Where: 25 Zhongtai Zhong Lu, Qinghe

Open: 9 am – 10:30 pm

Tel: 5944 8030

Contact: Ms. Zhou

(13501398531)

Website: ljr56.com

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

I'm trying to find some organic items that aren't as expensive as the stuff at Farmer's Market. Where can I find basic products like soap nuts?

You can try De Run Wu, a local organic farm and retailer. Email jiyunliang@gmail.com or call 8450 0809.

I've lived in Beijing for five years, and like most foreigners here, I don't own a car or plan on owning one. I've never had problems with taxis before – until now. Sometimes I hail for an open cab and drivers will go right by. It's happened to a lot of my foreigner friends as well. What's going on?

First of all, it's not a foreigner thing. There are lots of complaints on Weibo from locals about how hard it is to get a taxi these days. There are a couple of reasons: worsening traffic, and increasing costs for drivers. So far, effective regulations haven't been enacted to relieve the situation. As a result, more people are taking buses and the subway.

Are there any driving schools in Beijing that teach in English?

You can try Oriental Fashion Automobile Drive School, which offers classes in English. Its website, however – dfss.com.cn – does not have an English page. Ask a friend to call 5806 1703 for more information. It has five branches, including one at Shuangjing and East Third Ring Road, and several shuttles to take people to their locations.

How can I get a credit card in China? I need one to shop online and travel.

It's easy to apply for a credit card if you are working for a big company that helps with your work visa and can open a bank account for you.

(By Wei Ying)



Li Shinan's self portrait

Lone traveler

By Charles Zhu

Anyone who sees the group of coal-faced miners stepping out of the pits and into sunshine will be shocked as much by the work's artistic perfection as by its respectful message.

Like many of Li Shinan's paintings, the freehand, luxuriant splashes of ink continue the artist's free-wheeling, symbolic use of ink and red and blue color.

Li Shinan's appropriately-titled *The Men Who Tap the Light* is being kept by the National Gallery of Art for its artistic achievement.



Li Shinan's *The Men Who Tap the Light* ink painting is being kept by the National Gallery of Art for its artistic achievement.
Painted by Li Shinan



The 72-year-old artist, a research fellow at the Chinese National Academy of Arts, had more than 40 such pieces from different periods of his artistic career exhibited at the Mi Le Jing She Studio at Liulichang in 2011. Critics say his art smacks of the peace and ease of mind of genteel scholars of the Wei (220-265) and Jin (265-420) periods in Chinese history.

Li, born in Shanghai in 1940, began copying colorful paintings of women by the Qing-era artists Fei Xiaolou and Gai Qi. His fine brush work and close attention were cultivated by Shi Lu, his teacher, one of the important painters of the mid-20th century noted for his outlook on art and life.

Throughout his career, Li has focused on figure painting. His paintings of women, usually dressed or semi-nude, follow a style that combines traditional and modern ink brushwork and purposefully avoids realism. In Li's work, each deformation is symbolic and has abstract connotations.

Despite assimilating the best of traditional painting, folk art and European styles, Li's work remains unusually free of conventional form and obliterates the distinctions between portraits of figures and those of flowers and birds.

In 1956, Li went to Xi'an, Shaanxi Province to pursue his craft for 19 years. The humble beginning did not daunt his iron will to cultivate a unique style. While in Shaanxi, he went to live in the desolate Ma Jun Chai, a hamlet on the capital's west side where he copied frescoes from the walls of the tomb of a Tang Dynasty prince.

"These two and a half years were the most difficult period for the painter. However, it

was during this time that he learned to read the immense book of life and came to execute change," said Jia Pingwa, one of China's leading contemporary writers and a Shaanxi native.

"Every stroke and every dab of color in the paintings he drew were imbued with a profound wealth of emotional shock."

Li's freehand brushwork carries a message of historical profundity and personal grandeur. His rejection of formalism caught the attention of the artistic world of the early 1980s and had tremendous influence on younger generations of artists.



Li Shinan in painting

In 1985, he went further to subvert traditional technicality and form with his refusal to accept classic finesse and control in his series of paintings of Guizhou, a rocky and mountainous province. He hid himself in the province's southwestern mountains to seek artistic inspiration from the area's rustic life.

However, his success represented more than a rustic approach. His paintings, such as "Tiao Yue," incorporated his understanding of modern art in the European tradition. The result resembled the sculptures of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) and carried obvious influences from such painters as Christiaan Karel Appel and Willem de Kooning.

Critics declared that Li's modernity was no longer something that seemed artificially pasted on, and that his new language of ink-brush work was neither symbolic nor abstract, as in the Chinese tradition, nor realist as in the European tradition.

The series of paintings on huge reams of paper that he brought back shocked his peers with their grand structure and powerful, bold and unconstrained strokes. The splashes of ink on the white paper that bespoke rusticity, primitiveness and mysticism overwhelmed one of his friends, Pi Daojian, who declared, "The former Li Shinan is gone," and "it smashes the style of the genteel paintings just like smashing an elegant ancient china vase."

His later series of works also covered lights, white houses, lone travelers and the portraits of Daoist and Buddhist monks and historical calligraphers. His picture-story book *Li Shizhen, An Herbalist* won a national prize and was selected for a national exhibition of masterpieces from the last hundred years.

Li continues to explore the meeting point between tradition and modernity. Art critics say that to see Li's paintings is just like "drinking fine wine or bathing in gentle breeze, making one feel grandeur and peace of mind."

er on paper



Center stage

Editors: Yu Shanshan Zhao Hongyi Designer: Zhao Yan

BEIJING TODAY

City inspires French artist's paintings, collage



Cassagnac

By Zhang Dongya

French artist Cécile Granier de Cassagnac, the third Yishu 8 Prize winner, concluded her three-month exchange in Beijing with a solo exhibition at the gallery last month.

Included were 20 of the works created during her stay in the capital.

Cassagnac, born in 1979, lives and works in Paris. Her formal training includes a degree from the National School of Fine Arts in Paris, a study program at the Sydney College of the Arts in Australia and a residency at the French Institute in Abu Dhabi.

Whether she is painting on a large canvas or assembling a collage out of dead insects, her visual language focuses on five themes: birds, homes, insects, trees and hands.

Her trip to Beijing in November was her first to China.

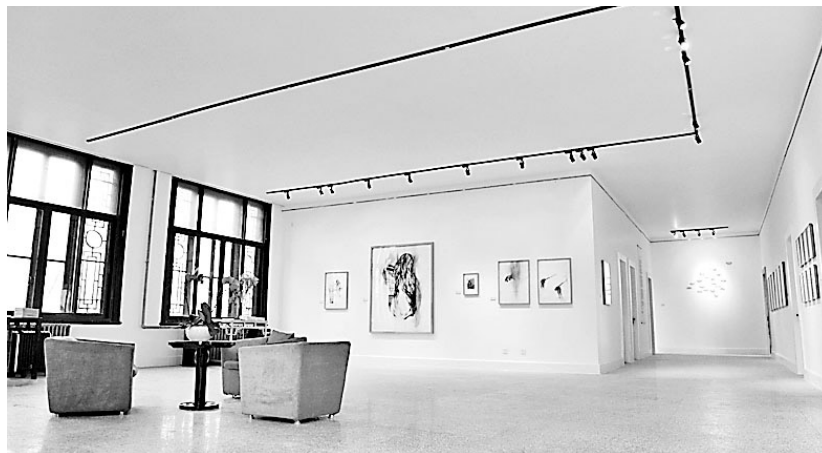
"Being away from your country, feeling uprooted and visiting unusual places forces one to open up – to take in new horizons," Cassagnac said.

The new location of Yishu 8, which housed the former Sino-French University, offered much inspiration for Cassagnac.

At the time of her arrival, Yishu 8 was under renovation. She collected everything old in the building to assemble snippets of the place's history: old posters, pictures, shards of glass and porcelain became tools for her creation.

One of her works, named *Deft Little Fingers*, is a papercut found in the building and placed on a wood panel.

Cassagnac also spent time rummaging through the local flea markets. Most of her works featuring birds were inspired by scenes at the market. She often went to visit Huasheng Tianqiao Market in Panjiayuan, where she saw vendors with performing birds. The most impressive, and



Yishu 8 Gallery, now located in an ancient building, offers Cassagnac endless inspiration.



Birds are a major theme in Cassagnac's works.

one that appeared in many of her paintings, was a man holding a rod with a bird tied to the end.

One shows a bird standing on the end of a branch with the other end connected to the sturdy trunk of a tree. Cassagnac said the "trunk" is a blending of two men. "All my works are open. I don't care whether people see the shape as a man or tree," she said.

Another bird painting shows a rod going through the body of a bird, with the end of the rod even and neat. Cassagnac said the way the city's trees are trimmed even in winter inspired the work. "I've never seen trees cut so even, without branches, in other countries," she said.

She also found some old pictures in the market, which she said invited imagination. One black-and-white picture was of a Chinese woman and her two little boys. Cassagnac redrew the two boys' eyes with a ballpoint pen. "The old picture made my imagination go wild, especially the scratch on the woman's hand, which made me imagine many stories about how it happened," she said.

She used grapefruit peels to shape smiling mouths in one work to show her first impression of Chinese people. "I tried to smile much to people here and I received many smiling faces from them," she said.

Her three-month stay included trips to Huangshan and the Great Wall. She said she loved climbing the Great Wall in winter. "It was very gray, just like the sky when I first came to Beijing. But what I saw made me feel like I was stepping into a Song Dynasty painting," she said.

The Yishu 8 Prize, established by the Association of Yishu 8 in 2010, has selected three artists to live and work in Beijing so that the city's energy can feed their creativity.



Photos provided by Yishu 8



Cassagnac's self portrait completed in Beijing

“Art is not a luxury, but a vital necessity.”

The classic films of Robert Bresson

By Zhang Dongya

French filmmaker Robert Bresson (1901-1999) made a name for himself through his elliptical storytelling, carefully orchestrated narration, beautiful camera style and use of non-professional actors.

The Art Cinema of Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) and the French Embassy are presenting five of his representative films, including *L'Argent* (1983), which won the Director's Prize at the 36th Cannes Film Festival, *Les Dames du Bois-de-Boulogne* (1945) and *Min van Balthazar* (1966).

Pickpocket (1959)

Bresson's incomparable tale of crime and redemption follows Michel, a young pickpocket who spends his days working the streets, subway cars and train stations of Paris. As his compulsion grows, so too does his fear that his luck is about to run out.

Tautly choreographed and crafted in Bresson's inimitable style, *Pickpocket* reveals a master director at the height of his powers. It was selected in Competition at Berlin Film Festival in 1960.

Au Hasard Balthazar (1966)

This film follows the donkey Balthazar as he is passed from owner to owner, some kind and some cruel, but all with motivations beyond his understanding. Balthazar, whose life parallels that of his first keeper, Marie (Anne Wiazemsky), is truly a beast of burden, suffering the sins of man. But despite his powerlessness, he accepts his fate nobly.

Through Bresson's unconventional approach to composition, sound and narrative, this seemingly simple story becomes a moving parable of purity and transcendence. It won the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (OCIC) Award at the Venice Film Festival in 1966.

Les Dames du Bois-de-Boulogne (The Ladies of the Bois de Boulogne) (1945)

This unique love story, based on a novelette by Denis Diderot and dialogue by Jean Cocteau, follows the maneuverings of a socialite who convives to initiate a scandalous affair between her aristocratic ex-lover and a prostitute.

In this second feature film, director Robert Bresson was already forging his singularly brilliant filmmaking techniques to create a moving study of the power of revenge and the strength of true love.

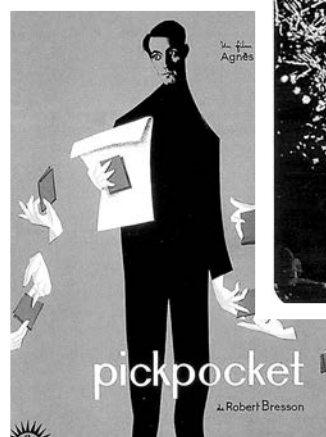
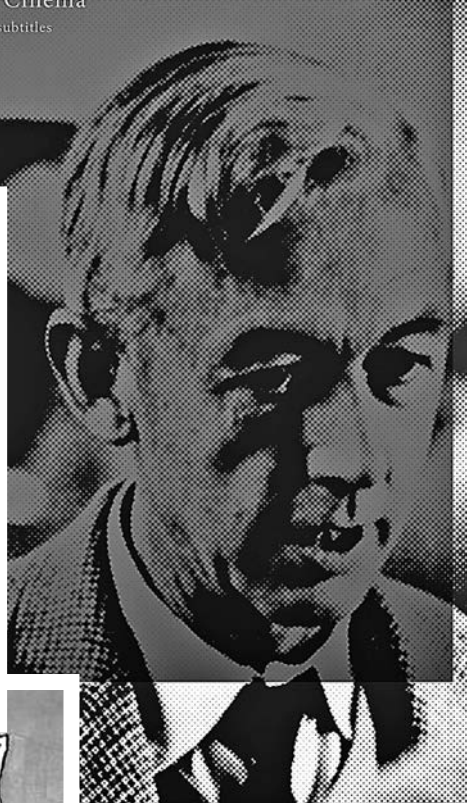
Mouchette (1967)

Bresson plumbs great reservoirs of feeling with *Mouchette*, one of the most searing portraits of human desperation ever put on film. Faced with a dying mother, an absent, alcoholic father and a baby brother in need of care, the teenage Mouchette seeks solace in nature and daily routine, a respite from her economic and pubescent turmoil.

An essential work of French filmmaking, this hugely empathetic drama elevates its trapped protagonist into one of cinema's great tragic figures.

Robert Bresson: Five Essential Films 2.4-2.12

UCCA 艺术影院 / Art Cinema
中英文字幕 / Chinese and English subtitles



Adapted from a novel by Georges Bernanos (*Diary of a Country Priest*), it offers both a sympathetic and a brutally unsentimental portrait. It won the Best Film at the Venice Film Festival in 1967 and OCIC Award at Cannes Film Festival that same year.

L'Argent (Money) (1983)

This film follows the journey of a forged 500 Franc note, at first casually passed off, but ultimately leading to the arrest of an innocent, bribery, firing, imprisonment, marital breakup and multiple murders.

Loosely adapted from a Tolstoy story, this was Bresson's final work produced in his '80s. It won the Best Director Award at Cannes Film Festival in 1983 and National Society of Film Critics Awards, USA in 1985.

Film schedule

Pickpocket
February 4, 4-6 pm
Au Hasard Balthazar
February 5, 7-9 pm
Les Dames du Bois-de-Boulogne
February 11, 4:40-6:30 pm
Mouchette
February 11, 7-9 pm
L'Argent
February 12, 7-9 pm

Robert Bresson: Five Essential Films

Where: Art Cinema, UCCA, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 4-12

Admission: 15 yuan per film, 10 yuan for students, free for UCCA members

Tel: 8495 9269

Notes: All films are screened in their original language with Chinese and English subtitles. The films are projected from 35mm reels.

Photos provided by UCCA

Application helps filter Taobao stores

By Annie Wei

Returning to cold weather isn't the worst part of returning from Spring Festival vacation: in southern second- and third-tier cities, visitors may have noticed that delicious meals cost much less than in Beijing.

To sidestep spiraling food prices, people have turned to Taobao. Guoku.com, a free App, was created to filter quality Taobao stores, and it's gained quite a following through word-of-mouth advertising.

Guolu is compatible with iPhone or iPad, and also sends Weibo updates. It features three or four recommended products every day.

Most of Guoku.com's recommendations are related to digital products and home decoration. Here are a few we like.



French vintage

To buy affordable furniture, you don't need to drive to South Third Ring Road. The store wendystyle.taobao.com has plenty of beautiful French vintage pieces at a third of the prices you'll find at retail stores.

For colorful fabric sofas or chairs, try casagaia.taobao.com.



Photos by Yang Yidong



CFP Photo

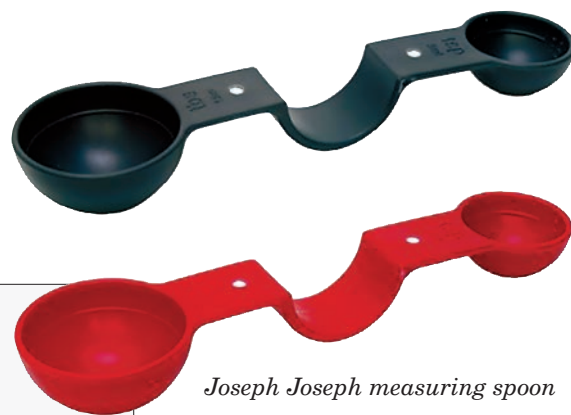
Sexy coffee maker

A compactly designed Nespresso is not just a coffeemaker, but a tasteful art piece for your kitchen. It's available at Shundan home appliance store at Sanlitun Village starting from 3,000 yuan. You can find cheaper deals on Taobao starting at 1,800 yuan.

The Taobao store Sweetie-house only sells Nespresso machines with capsules (48 yuan for 10 capsules).

However, purchasing from the store gives you a two-year warranty and home repair service within 7 to 10 working days.

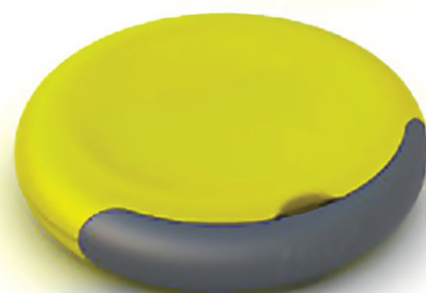
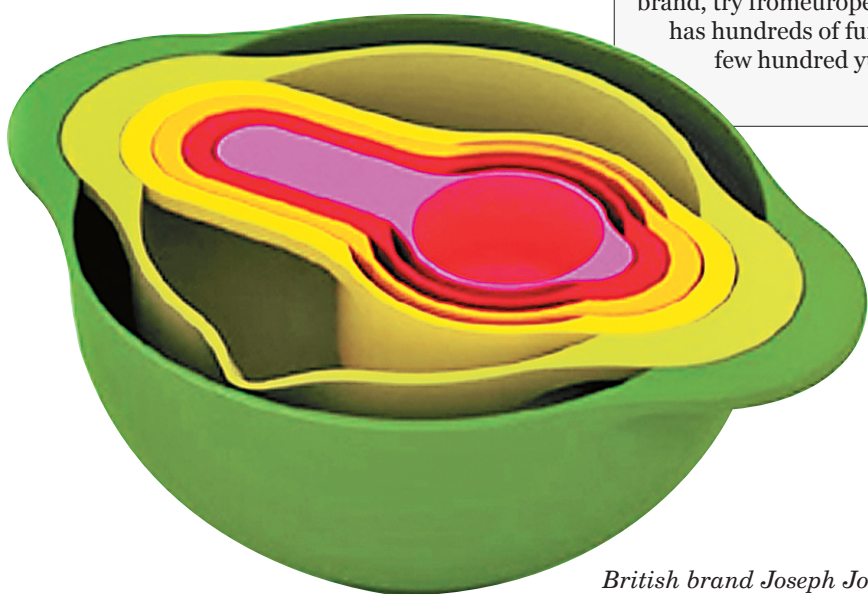
Website: sweetie-house.taobao.com



Joseph Joseph measuring spoon

Originals from Europe

Although China manufactures products nationwide, some items are not available on the Chinese mainland. To get quality European design items like Joseph Joseph, a British kitchenware brand, try fromeurope.taobao.com. It has hundreds of fun items costing a few hundred yuan.



British brand Joseph Joseph adds fun to cooking.

Photos provided by Google.com

Face Bar and Restaurant gets a makeover



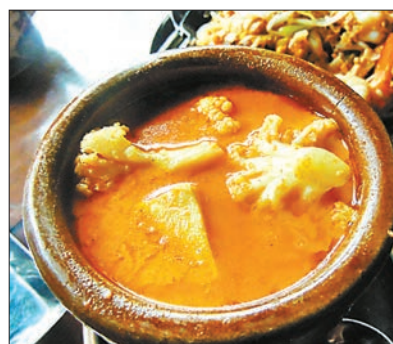
The Face Bar and Restaurant's garden



Thai stir-fried basil chicken, starting from 138 yuan



Platter of spring rolls, shrimp cake and grilled chicken, starting from 178 yuan



Red curry vegetable, 75 yuan

By Annie Wei

Face Bar and Restaurant at the south gate of Worker's Stadium has been around so long that it grew stagnant and lost many customers amid the capital's booming restaurant and bar scene.

But last year, Face hired a new manager and chefs from Thailand to improve its hospitality, service and food quality.

As one of the most popular destinations in Shanghai in the early 2000s – specializing in South Asian décor, ambiance and food – it made a splash when it moved to Beijing, with its Chinese garden hidden by bamboo terraces.

After enjoying a long run of success, it's no wonder Face wants to reestablish itself as a premiere destination for Thai food.

We recommend its classics like green papaya salad (75 yuan), featuring lots of lime juice to open up your appetite. We like its slightly bitter taste from the cracked lime seeds.

We also enjoyed the mixed platter of spring rolls, shrimp cake and grilled chicken (starting from 138 yuan).

Thai stir-fried basil pork (108 yuan) is also tasty. Normally it's made with ground pork, but nearly any type of pork or chicken can be used.

Thai coconut shrimp red curry (198 yuan) comes with five pieces of fat and delicious shrimp, and the coconut milk gives it a nice aroma and more taste.

Shrimp, mung bean sprouts and Thai noodles (65 yuan) is a light dish compared to the others. The delicious and chewy noodle is rich in flavor and texture.

Face's intimate ambiance makes it a perfect restaurant for celebrating Valentine's Day. Thai-born chef Choo Wong Rat will present a mix of Thai classics and some of his signature dishes (1,088 yuan for two), including combining lobster in garlic butter sauce, grilled beef with spicy chili sauce, strawberry cake and refreshing sherbet.

It is also a nice place to hang out for afternoon tea because of its quiet and pleasant surroundings.

The Face Bar and Restaurant

Where: 26 Dongcaoyuan, Gongti Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11:30 am – late
Tel: 6551 6788



Thai coconut shrimp red curry, starting from 198 yuan

Photos by Zhou Baoling

Single-origin coffee is freshly ground.

For the serious coffee drinker

By Annie Wei

Ocean Grounds, a new coffee store, is taking the concept of fresh and organic coffee one step further, offering a "farm-to-cup" experience by placing a 25-kilogram Probat coffee roaster in its store to supply custom blends and simple-origin coffees.

It offers a few specialties one cannot find anywhere else in town. It currently has five single-origin coffees (40 yuan) that are so fresh that their aroma permeates the store.

We like its cold-press selection (37 to 40 yuan). New Orleans style is cold-press coffee with chicory, cinnamon and house spices with milk; Diego style is made with organic almond milk, agave and house spices; and LA style is made with house spiced chai with cold-pressed coffee, organic almond milk and agave. The cold-press coffee is clear and relatively low in caffeine. The store has special equipment to make

cold-press coffee. It takes eight hours to prepare a big pot of cold press coffee every day.

You can also try its four types of homemade coffee (43 yuan): tru-bru (pour over), OG brew, siphon and French press.

There are also a few special hot espresso drinks, with espresso mixed chocolate and spices.

The store offers tea as well, such as chai tea latte (39 to 42 yuan). The company said its tea was from the local company Tea Journal, with which it shares the same organic philosophy.

Retail organic coffee beans are available at 275 yuan per pound.

Because the store is still new and it's located in a relatively quiet mall, it's a great place to work on your laptop or read a book.

Ocean Grounds Coffee

Where: 327, 3rd floor, U-Town, 2 Sanfeng Bei Li, Chaoyangmen, Chaoyang District
Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 8561 0961



Ocean Grounds is located at U-Town mall. Photos by Xiaomujiang

Dinning

The Moroccan Kitchen

Park Plaza Beijing Science Park is proud to welcome you to the new all-day dining restaurant Cafe 25. It has interactive show kitchens, open bright spaces and an area for private dining all wrapped up in a great new look.

The nightly dinner buffet includes seafood, sushi and sashimi, the best of European and Asian tables and sinful desserts for the low price of 188 yuan per person.

The dinner buffet includes a complimentary soft drink or one glass of draft beer or red or white wine.

From February through March, Cafe 25 features the aromatic foods of Morocco, from fragrant lamb and chicken tajines to the rich sweet dessert flavors of Chebbakia and Dziria.



Where: Park Plaza Beijing Science Park, 25 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District
Tel: 8235 6699

Pink afternoon tea at Lobby Lounge



Celebrate life's most important pleasure and share a unique and intimate afternoon with your Valentine this year at China World Hotel's Lobby Lounge.

Against a stunning Chinese imperial palace-inspired backdrop and the sweet sounds of live music, the Lobby Lounge's Pink Afternoon Tea is the colors of love and passion. This sumptuous sweet and savory set includes delectable sandwiches, enticing Valentine's Day-inspired pastries and miniature scones.

Although ideally paired with a range of fragrant teas, why not treat your loved one to a glass of pink Champagne?

Where: Lobby Lounge, China World Hotel, 1 Jianwai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: February 14-19

Cost: 188 yuan (15 percent gratuity), add a glass of Moët et Chandon Rose Champagne for 108 yuan

Tel: 6505 5838

An Aria Valentine

Aria, one of Beijing's most romantic and elegant venues, is offering an exquisite six-course gourmet set menu. Toast your love with a glass of Veuve Clicquot upon arrival and whisper sweet nothings across a candle-lit table for two. The stylish Valentine celebration includes a glass of champagne and a beautiful red rose for 658 yuan per person.

The day's menu includes champagne and oysters; crab and caviar; avocado, lime and apple; goat's cannelloni; purée of goat's cheese and yogurt, smoked aubergine, dried olive liquorice; scallop and pork; parmesan, fennel, peas, black Angus tenderloin; potato puree, spinach and crab mushrooms; strawberries and cream; and rose granita.

Where: Aria, China World Hotel, 1 Jianwai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 36



Event

Jundushan Ski Resort & Hot Spring SPA

Looking to get close to nature this winter? Nothing beats skiing and spa treatment in the mountains.

Board our private bus and leave the crowded city behind. Get your limbs active in the snow and feel yourself fly across the mountains. After a few good hours of exercise, float and soak your body in the nearby hot spring spa.

One of the best spots for skiing in Beijing is located 30 kilometers from downtown. Jundushan Ski Resort is at the foot of Jundushan Mountain and bordered by the historic site Ming Shisanling Tomb on its west and Xiaotangshan Hot Springs Resort on its east.

An outdoor dip in the depths of a Beijing winter may not seem like a relaxing way to spend a weekend, but the waters at Jiuhua Hot Springs Resort are just the antidote for parched winter skin and aching bones. It is the biggest of several resorts which draw hot water from a prehistoric lake buried hundreds of meters underground and makes for a fun and relatively inexpensive weekend getaway.

When: February 5 and 19, 9 am – 7 pm

Cost: 680 yuan per person, including transportation, insurance, entrance tickets, fees, ski equipment and clothing rental.

Tel: 8404 4166



Half-day Photography

Culture Yard invites you to join a one-day photography workshop with award-winning photographer Peter Carney.

The workshop will help students grasp the fundamentals of photography, give them confidence in using their cameras and encourage them to develop their own style. The workshop, set in a historic hutong, is taught in a relaxed manner and introduces techniques and provides shooting opportunities in the historic neighborhoods.

Each student will be given one-on-one time during the editing sessions to allow for a comprehensive learning experience. Throughout the sessions, all the locations will be introduced by Echo Wang to ensure the students have a thorough understanding and are able to communicate with the locals.

Class size is limited to 10 people.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong (Beixinqiao station on Line 5, 300 meters east of Exit C)

When: February 19, 1-6 pm

Cost: 300 yuan

Email: workshop@cultureyard.net

Requirement: Each student should bring their own SLR camera. Equivalent learning materials will be provided.

(By Jacky Zhang)

Hotel

Win a romantic trip to Maldives at One East

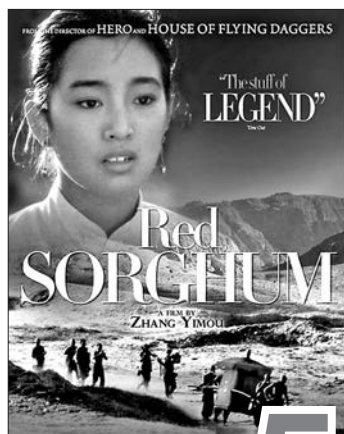
Come and enjoy an inspiring five-course Chocolate Menu designed with passion and love by One East's executive chef. Diners will have a chance to win round-trip tickets for two to Maldives! Dinner costs 1,599 yuan per couple, or 2,399 yuan with a one-night stay in the King Deluxe room on February 14.

Where: Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 14

Tel: 5865 5030





Sat, Feb. 5

Movie

Red Sorghum (with English subtitles)

Red Sorghum is a Chinese classic about a young woman working on a distillery for sorghum liquor in 1987. It is based on a novel by Mo Yan.

The film marked the directorial debut of internationally acclaimed filmmaker Zhang Yimou and the acting debut of Gong Li. With its lush and lusty portrayal of peasant life, it immediately vaulted Zhang to the forefront of the Fifth Generation directors.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, north section of Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 4 pm

Admission: 40 yuan, 30 yuan for students and elderly

Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8001

Indie Film

Huan Huan (with Chinese and English subtitles)

A young woman named Huan Huan resolves to leave her village in Yunnan and go to the city to find work. She has been having an affair with Wang Degang, the village's married doctor. Huan Huan marries a man named Yue Lin. Not long after her wedding, Wang helps Huan Huan's brother pay a 1,500 yuan fine to the village family planning committee, thus clearing the way for the brother to return to the village. Huan Huan resumes her affair with Wang until Yue one day finds out about everything.

Where: UCCA Art Cinema, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 4-6:30 pm

Admission: 15 yuan, 10 yuan for students (full-time with valid ID)

Tel: 5780 0200



Fri, Feb. 3

Concert Stephen Kovacevich Piano Recital

Kovacevich, an American pianist born in 1940, is best known for his interpretations of the core classical repertoire, including Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms and Bartók. He will play Schubert's Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, Beethoven's

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major and Bagatelles Op. 126, Nos. 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-360 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Sun, Feb. 4



Nightlife

Bob Marley's Night

The legendary Marley helped spread Jamaican music across the globe. Now, another reggae artist from Jamaica, Abijah, will come to China for the first time to present contemporary Jamaican reggae. His single, "Revelation," remained on the charts in Jamaica for 30 weeks, and he has performed on

stages worldwide. "Mitabe (China)" will be the live band, alongside DJs such as Meiwent Sound and Ultimate Productions.

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 70 yuan pre-sale, 100 yuan at the door

Tel: 6404 2711

Mon, Feb. 6

Exhibition

The Art of the Enlightenment

The Art of the Enlightenment is hosted by the National Museum of China, joined with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and Bayerische Staatsgemaldesammlungen Munich. The exhibition has as many as 600 masterpieces on loan covering Chodowiecki, Friedrich, Fuseli, Gainsborough,

Goya, Graff, Greuze, Hogarth, Houdon, Kauffmann, Piranesi, Raeburn, Schick, Tischbein, Vernet and Watteau. Among them are paintings, sculptures and art crafts, as well as garments and exquisite scientific instruments. The exhibition is divided into nine sections highlighting core themes of 18th century art in Europe.

Where: East side of Tian'anmen Square, 16 East Chang'an Avenue, Dongcheng District

When: Until March 31, daily except Monday, 9 am - 5 pm

Admission: 10 yuan

Tel: 6511 6400



Wed, Feb. 8

Concert

Rhythm of Spring: Beijing Symphony Orchestra Concert

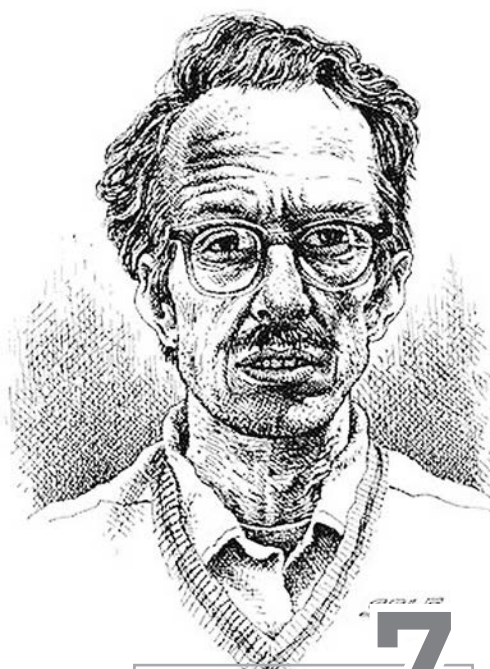
Beijing Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1977, is one of the renowned symphony orchestras in China. Tan Lihua leads it as Music Director and Principal Conductor. The BSO will feature spring-themed repertoires for its 2012 seasonal debut, which includes Northwest China Capriccio Suite, Yunnan Capriccio Suite and The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-480 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000



Tue, Feb. 7

Movie

Crumb (1994)

Crumb chronicles the life and career of the underground cartoonist Robert Crumb. Just like his critical and satirical drawings, the film records many unpopular truths about Crumb and his family, such as family violence, mental illness, sexual rejection and so on.

It took Zwigoff, the director, nine years to film the documentary. Eventually it won widespread acclaim, including both the Grand Jury Prize and best cinematography prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

Where: No.3 Club, 43C, Beisanhuan Xi Lu, Haidian District

When: 7:00 pm

Admission: 15 yuan

Tel: 8211 5288

Exhibition

Leaving Realism Behind

Leaving Realism Behind pays attention to abstract art's progression in the East and West and the interplay between the two. The exhibition presents work by currently active artists home and abroad, such as Ding Yi, Li Songsong, Lee Ufan, Mark Rothko, Agnes Martin, Bridget Riley and other big-name artists. Among them, the work No. 1, 1957 by American abstract master Mark Rothko will be on display. Rothko used a minimalist language of pure form to cut right to absolute existence.

Where: Pace Beijing, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 12, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm

Admission: Free on weekdays

Tel: 5978 9781

(By Niu Chen)

Thu, Feb. 9



The poetic beauty of Li Bai's ancient village

By Charles Zhu

Whenever people mention the Peach Blossom Pond of Chencun in Jingxian County, Anhui Province, they invariably relate it to Li Bai, a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

In 775, Li arrived at this village surrounded by cliffs and filled with peach trees and wine shops. In one of his poems, he sings of his friendship with Wang Lun, a local villager. Amid the bamboo groves and black-tiled roofs, you can almost hear the timeless verse: "A thousand chi deep is the water in Peach Blossom Pond, but it's still shallower than the affection Wang Lun has for me."

Today, visitors can still find the ancient pond lined with trees and ride a boat from the exact place that Li did all the way to the Lake of Peace at the foot of the Yellow Mountains (Huangshan). It's a journey of sheer beauty and history.



Visitors can still find peach trees in the village, but they'll be happy to also find a pavilion near a ferry on the pond to commemorate Li Bai. Villagers also manufacture a liquor named after the pond.

The villagers' whitewashed houses snake along the pond's shore, offering a nostalgic and exquisite picture of Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) architecture. The roughly 700 homes here are among the best preserved from that era.

The streets are covered with slabs quarried from nearby mountains, more evidence of the village's long history.

Among the earliest buildings in this village was the Fufeng Guild Hall, built during the reign of Emperor Kaihuang (581-600) of the Sui Dynasty (581-618). It was the first of China's guildhalls,

testifying to the fact that the village used to be a very prosperous hub of business and traffic. Regrettably, the building has collapsed, but the ruins remain.

Other notable structures include Yimen, the Gate of Righteousness, which was erected during the Tang. Then there's the Dazi Tower, constructed during the Yuan.

The Ming-style ancestral temple of the Zhais, built entirely from Nanmu wood, is the biggest of its kind in China, according to professor Luo Zhewen, a specialist in ancient architecture at the State Bureau of Historical Documents and Relics.

The Zhais, according to a legend, were the offspring of Zhang Liang, one of the most important advisors to Liu Bang, the first emperor of the Han. During the Ming

and Qing dynasties, 15 of the Zhais passed the imperial examinations at the national level, well over a hundred at the provincial level and thousands at the county level.

Zhai Guoru, a general, was sent to crush a rebellion in Yunnan Province and lost his life during the reign of the Wanli Emperor of Ming. The emperor named the family's ancestral temple as the Hall of Loyalty and Piety. The whole structure was built using rare stone and wooden carvings and remains intact after hundreds of years. What's most interesting is that the *queti* – the column bracket – at a side corridor is shaped like an abacus. On the abacus is recorded all the costs in building the house.

The three-storied octagonal Wen Chang Ge, a library, was built during the 32nd reign

of the Qianlong emperor of the Qing Dynasty. The architectural style is classic and refined. There is a tablet on each floor. This is the place where the Zhais studied and kept Confucian classics.

One of the most interesting experiences is taking a walk on the streets and seeing the whitewashed houses of local farmers that are vibrant and dynamic. You may see something that has been long gone by, such as the Laohu Zao, literally the Tiger Stove. It is a stove made of brick and earth, where the boiled water is for sale. The business, mostly family-based, was brisk in the first half of the 20th century in small-town China. Scenes of ladies washing their laundry in the river make the landscape all the more picturesque and vital.

Another architectural attraction is Guo Jie Lou, the bridge tower that sits astride the street. It is so ancient, so beautiful and full of so much nostalgic touches that you will be brought back to those bygone days.

A reservoir near the village, formed from the Qingyi River. If you are lucky, you will be able to eat fish caught from the river. Another delicacy unique to the locality is *tuji* – earthen chicken. You will never see a chicken cooked in such a way in anywhere else in the world.

Getting to Chencun Village: Take a train from Beijing to Xuancheng, which takes 17 hours. Then take a bus to Jingxian County. The village is 38 kilometers away from the county seat. Transfer to a bus to the village, which departs every half-hour.



Chencun Village is famous for its Peach Blossom Pond, which appears in Li Bai's poems.

CFP Photos